

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PANAMA 01762 161831Z
ACTION ARA-14

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DEPT FOR ARA/PAF AND PAN

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTIONS

THE FOLLOWING SENT FROM USIS/PANAMA ACTION USINFO INFO SECSTATE
DATED 16 MAR REPEATED FOR YOUR ACTION/INFO
QUOTE

MEDIA REACTION

1. PANAMA CITY -- ALL DAILIES AND ALL MORNING RADIO TALK SHOWS
FOCUSED TODAY ON THE TREATY DEBATES AND TODAY'S VOTE. WHILE
MOST NEWS STORIES AND COMMENTARY MENTION THE FACT THAT TODAY'S
VOTE ONLY DEALS WITH THE NEUTRALITY TREATY, THE OVERALL IMPACT
IS ONE OF A DECISIVE AND FINAL VOTE. LA ESTRELLA, FOR EXAMPLE,
CARRIES BANNER HEAD: "TODAY'S VOTE WILL PREPARE THE OTHER
TREATY: HISTORIC VOTE IN U.S. SENATE TO DECIDE FUTURE OF THE
CANAL TREATY." GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED MATUTINO CARRIES BANNER
HEAD: "EXPECTANCY AND PRUDENT SERENITY MOTIVATE PANAMANIAN
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WAITING FOR SENATE VOTE," AND SISTER TABLOID CRITICA, "LAST
EFFORTS OF CARTER TO GET RATIFICATION."

2. MOST COMMENTATORS HAVE NOT YET FOCUSED CLEARLY ON THE
PROPOSED RESERVATIONS. RADIO COMMENTATORS THIS MORNING DID
NOT SEEM TO APPRECIATE THE MEANING OF THE DE CONCINI RESERVATION,
HOWEVER PANAMAIAAN PRESS ATTACHE IN WASHINGTON, DIANA AROSEMENA,

SAID THE FOLLOWING ON PAGE ONE LA ESTRELLA: "SENATOR DENNIS DECONCINI, DEM. OF ARIZONA, SHOULD PRESENT A RESERVATION TODAY THURSDAY ON WHOSE ACCEPTANCE HE CONDITIONS HIS SUPPORT OF THE TREATIES. THE DECONCINI AMENDMENT SPELLS OUT WITHOUT AMBIGUITY THE RIGHT OF THE U.S. AND PANAMA TO USE MILITARY FORCE IF NECESSARY TO RESTORE THE FUNCTIONING AND THE OPERATION OF THE CANAL. THE DECONCINI RESERVATION RIDICULES THE SPIRIT AND SUBSTANTIVE CONTENT OF THE TREATIES WHOSE PRIME ACHIEVEMENT IS TO ELIMINATE THE MILITARY PRESENCE IN PANAMA. IT'S PREDICTABLE THAT THE SENATORIAL LEADERSHIP WILL NOT SUPPORT HIS AMMENDMENT WHICH IS A VIOLATION OF THE ESSENCE OF THE NEUTRALITY PACT."

3. MATUTINO IN ITS EDITORIAL, "ZERO HOUR," ASKS ITS READERS TO AWAIT THE RESULTS WITH SERENITY AND CONFIDENCE. IT POINTS OUT THE PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT OF PRESIDENT CARTER IN WORKING TOWARD RATIFICATION AND ADDS: "THE MOST OUTSTANDING FEATURE OF THAT STRATEGY HAS BEEN THE PRESENTATION OF THE REALITY OF THE TREATIES IN A FORM MORE ACCEPTABLE FOR THE RECALCITRANT SENATE CONSERVATIVES, PRESERVING, IN EACH CASE, THE PERMANENT SPIRIT OF THE DOCUMENTS' ORIGINAL CONTEXT. A FACT FOR WHICH, AS IS LOGICAL, THE PEOPLE SHOULD NOT VIEW AS A SIGN OF RENUNCIATION OF WHAT WAS ACHEIVED IN THE TREATY SIGNED IN THE OAS LAST YEAR."

4. GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED TABLOID "CRITICA" CARRIES LEAD EDIT ENTITLED "THE AMENDMENT FAIR". ACCORDING TO CRITICA, NONE UNCLASSIFIED

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OF THE AMENDMENTS OR RESERVATIONS PROPOSED YESTERDAY WERE OF GREAT IMPORTANCE INCLUDING THE NUNN AMENDMENT "WHICH DOESN'T SEEM TO REQUIRE ADOPTION BY BOTH PARTIES." AFTER BRIEFLY SUMMARIZING OTHER PROPOSED AMENDMENTS, CRITICA COMMENTS: "IT IS UNDOUBTABLE THAT THE GENERAL TONE OF THE DEBATE... DID NOT REACH THE LEVEL CLAIMED FOR SENATORIAL MAJESTY. BUT IT IS FAIR TO RECOGNIZE THAT THERE WERE THOSE WHO ROSE ABOVE THE OTHERS AND WHO KNEW HOW TO TREAT THE ISSUES WITH DIGNITY AND ELEGANCE."

5. CAMILO O. PEREZ, IN HIS DAILY BONA FIDE COLUMN ON THE DITORIAL PAGE OF CRITICA REMAINED IMPATIENT ON THE QUESTION OF AMENDMENTS. THE PANAMANIAN PEOPLE, SAYS PEREZ, WILL NOT ACCEPT MORE HUMILIATION, "NOR WILL THEY ACCEPT THE SYSTEMATIC CHANGING OF A TREATY THAT WAS NOT ACCEPTED BY ALL OF THE PEOPLE IN THE OCTOBER 23 PLEBISCITE."

6. "NEVERTHELESS," CONTINUES PEREZ, "SOME SENATORS INSIST ON INTOLERABLE 'RESERVATIONS' AND 'AMENDMENTS.' INTOLERABLE BECAUSE THE PANAMANIAN PEOPLE WILL NOT IN ANY WAY ACCEPT THAT AMERICAN TROOPS CAN RETURN HERE WHENEVER THEY FEEL LIKE IT... THIS POSITION SO ABSURD AND OUT OF STEP WITH THE TIMES IS A WAY OF MATERIALLY CHANGING THE TREATY. AND OF COURSE, EVERY AMENDMENT OR

RESERVATION IS TO US A KIND OF REJECTION OF THE AGREEMENT,
BECAUSE PANAMA CANNOT KEEP ON LOWERING ITS TROUSERS TO ALLOW
AN INTERVENING ARMY TO REACH UP ITS BUTTOCKS IN ORDER TO FEEL
ITS PATRIOTIC PROSTATE."

7. GOVERNMENT RADIO NETWORK, RADIO LIBERTAD, CONTINUES ITS LIVE
SPANISH BROADCASTS OF THE TREATY DEBATES. THE MINISTRY OF
GOVERNMENT HAS ALSO CALLED ALL PANAMANIAN STATIONS TO JOIN
RADIO LIBERTAD AT THREEE IN A NATIONWIDE HOOKUP FOR THE VOTE.
CHANNELS TWO AND FOUR ARE BOTH PLANNING LIVE SATELLITE
TRANSMISSIONS FROM WASHINGTON AT TEN AND EIGHT P.M.
RESPECTIVELY. ITEM UNQUOTE
JORDEN

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